



ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY NO. 15.17

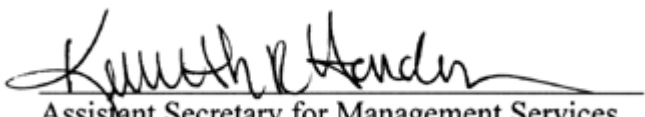
SUBJECT: External Content on DSHS Web Sites

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AUTHORIZING SOURCE: DSHS E-Government Executive Steering Committee
Washington State Digital Government Executive Steering Committee
Technical Architecture Advisory Group Generic Intended Use Guidelines

EFFECTIVE DATE: December 1, 2000

REVISED: February 1, 2003

APPROVED BY: 
Assistant Secretary for Management Services

SUNSET REVIEW DATE: February 1, 2005

PURPOSE:

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), "Department" recognizes that 'external content' may be placed upon publicly accessible Internet web pages operated by the Department. External content is content provided by entities that are not part of government.

This policy recognizes that it may be in the public interest to include links, on the Department web pages, to resources that are provided by others on websites outside the Department's control. The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear policy statement that DSHS web sites are not public forums and that links to external pages from the DSHS pages are established and retained at the discretion of the Department. The policy also provides guidelines on when links to external sources are inappropriate.

APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE:

This policy applies to all organizational units and only to the public site web pages that are operated by the Department.

This policy is not intended in any way to prohibit external content that:

- Is required or authorized by law; or
- Constitutes official government business or furthers the specific purpose of a government organization's web page.

POLICY:

Content Guidelines

In exercising its discretion to allow external content on web pages it operates, the Department will be guided by the purpose of the DSHS public web site(s) that is as follows:

The DSHS Internet site provides an electronic portal for citizens, businesses and public employees that allows them easy access to current information about social welfare programs serving departmental clients, to obtain benefits and to do business with the Department of Social and Health Services.

Generally, external content that does not suit the purposes of the Department includes materials that:

- Are likely to offend a reasonable citizen or are profane in nature;
- Contain reference to illegal or undesirable practices or conduct;
- Endorse or oppose political candidates, bills under consideration by the Legislature or other positions not officially endorsed by the Department;
- Discriminate or promote discrimination that is prohibited by federal and state laws and departmental policy,
- Make claims of efficacy, suitability, desirability or make other non-objective statements about businesses, products or services; or
- Are sites that may be considered inappropriate for government.

The Department does not intend for the public web pages to be open public forums. The Department, at its sole discretion, will determine whether external content meets its purposes and will be permitted on its public site web pages.

Responsibility for external content:

Each organizational unit will designate staff to determine whether external content meets departmental purposes. Questions regarding the appropriateness of external content, that can't be resolved by the designated staff, should be directed to administration management or the Attorney General as needed.

Disclaimer

Web sites should contain a disclaimer advising the user that the Department will not be held responsible for the content on other sites.

Removal of Content

The Department reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to withdraw external content. This discretion may be exercised if the Department determines the content or link does not advance the purpose of the DSHS public web site, or the Department has reason to believe that the content refers or links the viewer to content that violates any of the above listed guidelines or would be reasonably likely to offend a reasonable citizen.

The Department will be permitted to withdraw content based on the criteria listed above even though it might not be legally obligated to take such action.

The Department also reserves the right to withdraw external content for operational reasons or for the convenience of the Department.